

a question of spending the money smarter.

But strengthening Medicare financially is not enough. Washington has a way of making everything it touches more expensive, more complicated, and more difficult for Americans to understand. That too must change. The Medicare paperwork is overwhelming. We need to simplify the Medicare system so that seniors can read the bills and interact effectively with their doctors and hospitals. We have to end Washington mismanagement, and end it now.

But even that is still not enough. Too many seniors have told me that their Medicare coverage is inadequate. It does not cover prescription drugs or eyeglasses. Seniors should be in charge, not the Washington bureaucracy. Seniors should have the right to choose the health care plan that suits them best, and no Washington bureaucrat should have the ability to deny them that choice. Remember, every dollar that is spent on the Washington bureaucracy is a dollar that cannot go to health care for seniors.

And that also means an end to all the abuse, fraud, and waste in the Medicare system. Under the Republican plan, doctors and hospitals that abuse the Medicare system will not get a slap on the wrist. They will be punished—legally and financially. Washington may not have been serious about fighting abuse, fraud and waste, but Republicans are.

It is our responsibility to strengthen Medicare financially so that it does not go bankrupt now or in the future. It is our responsibility to simplify Medicare so that every recipient will understand and be able to use the system easily. It is our responsibility to fight the waste, fraud and abuse in the Medicare system. In short, it is our responsibility to find a solution for Medicare for the next generation, not just the next election.

I will fight for the right of every senior citizen in every district across America to get the facts. I will demand that the Medicare trustees and the White House make available to every American the exact financial details about Medicare. The President may not like it, but I believe the people who pay the bills have a right to know exactly what I know. You have a right to know the facts about Medicare. After all, it is your money.

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#### CRISIS IN MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. TAUZIN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to follow my friend from Minnesota, Mr. GUTKNECHT, to talk about the Medicare crisis in America. It is a crisis. It is upon us. The Medicare system is not about to go bankrupt, it will

not soon go bankrupt, it is already falling into bankruptcy.

The first quarter of this year, unexpectedly the Medicare system began slipping into bankruptcy. What does that mean? It means that the money coming into the system from your and my taxes is not enough to cover the money going out of the system, going out to pay the bills of seniors who need Medicare coverage.

Why is there not enough money in the system? Is it because we are not paying enough taxes? No, it is because Medicare costs are running at three times the rate of inflation. The waste, fraud, and abuse is about to ruin a system critical to American seniors, my mother included.

Mom just got out of the hospital in January, again from another serious problem. She has survived cancer twice. Last month she played in the Senior Olympics at home and won 5 medals—3 silver and two gold—one in javelin and one in shot put. She is a miracle.

But Medicare has saved my mother, and it has saved countless of other mothers, fathers, grandparents of Members of this House and of citizens all over this country. Can we afford to let Medicare go bankrupt? I say no.

Is it fair for anyone to scare seniors into resisting changes to reform Medicare to make it work? Is it fair to seniors to keep scaring them with Medicare cut language? The truth is if somebody does not fix Medicare soon, we will face three choices very soon.

First, we will have to choose between not taking care of our seniors anymore—and we will not make that choice, we will always take care of our seniors in America. Or, second, we will have to choose to tax the dickens out of the younger generation, to double their payroll taxes to put more money in this bucket that has got a hole in it. Or, third, we are going to have to borrow and borrow and borrow on future generations to cover the bankruptcy that is upon us in Medicare.

The biggest enemy of seniors in America is not those of us who are trying to fix Medicare, who are trying to give seniors more choices, who are trying to cut the waste, the fraud, the bureaucratic abuse, the mess we have in this system. The biggest enemy to Medicare and to seniors is not the Republican Party and those of us who have offered a plan to fix it.

The biggest enemy of our seniors, the biggest enemy of Medicare is anyone who will try to scare seniors into doing nothing, because to do nothing means we face one of those three awful choices: to borrow our whole country into bankruptcy, to tax the dickens out of future generations, or to give up caring for our seniors, none of which are good options.

We want to continue a sound and strong Medicare system for America's seniors, but to do so will take some courage around this place. It will take someone willing to say it is time to fix

a problem before it goes bankrupt. It will take someone willing, literally in the White House, to address this issue instead of trying to scare seniors into believing that everybody is trying to cut their benefits or cut their program. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The truth is Medicare is already going bankrupt as we speak tonight. If we do not show some courage around this place and fix that system for our seniors, if someone in the White House does not join us instead of trying to scare seniors across America, Medicare will indeed fail the seniors who depend upon it, my mother included.

If all of you love your parents and your grandparents, as I know you must, as much as I love mine, then can we not join together and fix this problem while there is still a chance to fix it? Do we have to resort to partisan tactics and scare tactics just to resist each other politically? Or can we look beyond these political boundaries and fix the Medicare system for the seniors of our country, and preserve our children's opportunities to earn a decent living for themselves without getting taxed into oblivion?

Those are the hard choices we face, but I came here to make hard choices. I came here to tell the truth and to face the difficult problems we have. This is one of the most difficult ones we have.

Anybody who will scare seniors instead of facing this tough and difficult problem and curing the Medicare problems, taking care of the waste, fraud, and abuse that is ripping this system apart, anyone who is willing to scare seniors instead of doing that does not deserve to be reelected to any office in this land. Anyone who is willing to work for seniors, to repair the Medicare system, indeed deserves their trust and their confidence. It comes down to that.

Do we have faith enough in each other, in our purpose here in Washington, to serve this Nation and to do the right thing for those who sent us here, to put partisan attacks and scare tactics behind us? I think we can and I think we should, but it will take someone in the White House to show a little more courage and a little less partisanship.

#### THE TAX TRAP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, as I travel around the first district of Georgia I meet a lot of people—in Savannah, Brunswick, Statesboro and also in the smaller towns like Odum, Reidsville, Glennville—and basically wherever I am having town meetings, they are always asking the same questions; Why are so many families across America struggling to keep their heads above water? Why are Americans working harder and harder and having less